

California Prison Hunger Strikers Continue Their Resistance

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"We are now at a critical stage, where each minute that passes is extremely taxing mentally and physically. Many of us participating since day one are suffering what may be irreversible damage, and are facing a very real possibility of death."

Pelican Bay hunger striker and Short Corridor representative [Aurturo Castellano](#) 55 Days on Hunger Strike

California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation's (CDCR) refuses to negotiate with prison hunger strikers as they enter day 56 of the protest at solitary confinement and inhumane conditions. The hunger strikers are in increasing danger from heart attacks but maintain their resolve to continue their resistance until the CDCR agrees to negotiate around their [five core demands](#).

Governor Gerry Brown maintains the same refusal to negotiate hoping that the punitive measures taken by the CDCR against the hunger strikers such as refusal of medical treatment, blasting cold air into cells , withholding mail and visits, will break the protest. Instead, Governor Brown wants to pump millions into expanding the prison-industrial complex in California which benefits big business while imprisoning ever greater numbers of working class people.

The refusal of CDCR and Governor Brown to negotiate with the hunger strikers is bringing increasing condemnation from around California. In the last few days [criminologists and criminal justice reformers](#) have called upon Brown and the CDCR to begin immediate negotiations with the hunger strikers and to, "Stop the political posturing and name-calling, and start negotiating before there is blood on your hands."

Meanwhile the [California Conference of Catholic Bishops](#) have again reiterated their opposition to the CDCR's use of solitary confinement of prisoners and offered to serve on any oversight committee, "that may be convened to investigate any alleged human rights violations in the California's prisons in order to propose the necessary corrective measures."

The continuing resistance of the hunger strikers taken with increasing public pressure has finally forced leading politicians in California to intervene in the situation. On August 30, Senator Loni Hancock (D-Berkeley) and Assembly member Tom Ammiano (D-San Francisco), who are Chairs of the Senate and Assembly Committees on Public Safety, issued a statement declaring their intention to convene public hearings on the conditions in California's prisons that have led to the hunger strike. The public hearings are scheduled to start in the autumn and continue into next year.

“The issues raised by the hunger strike are real – concerns about the use and conditions of solitary confinement in California’s prisons – are real and can no longer be ignored,” Senator Hancock (D-Berkeley) and Assembly member Ammiano (D-San Francisco) said in a [joint statement](#).

The hearings will focus upon two issues raised by the hunger strike: the conditions facing prisoners in maximum security prisons and the effect of long-term solitary confinement as a prison management strategy, and a human rights issue.

Assembly member [Tom Ammiano](#), chair of the Assembly committee on Public Safety made the further damning statement, “The Courts have made clear that the hunger strikers have legitimate issues of policy and practice that must be reviewed. The Legislature has a critical role in considering and acting on their concerns. We cannot sit by and watch our state pour money into a system that the US. Supreme Court has declared does not provide constitutionally acceptable conditions of confinement and that statistics show has failed to increase public safety.”

Lawyers for the hunger strikers will communicate the proposal for public hearings to the men. Meanwhile, the hunger strike continues in the face of yet [more punitive action](#) by the CDCR. 80 Pelican Bay hunger strikers have been relocated to New Folsom Prison and suffered mistreatment by prison authorities leading other prisoners there to join the hunger strike in protest. People around the world need to [keep up the pressure](#) upon the CDCR and Governor Brown to negotiate in good faith with the representatives of the hunger strikers.

At Pelican Bay, the four main representatives of prisoners in the Secure Housing Unit who initiated the call for a mass hunger strike, have issued the [following appeal](#):

“We are calling on all people of conscience to make their opposition heard. The people have the power to change things now. Know this: Our spirit and resolve remain strong and we know we can count on you all! Together we are making it happen, not only for ourselves, but, more importantly, for the generations to come.”

With the Utmost Solidarity, Love, and Respect—Onward in Struggle,
Pelican Bay State Prison Short Corridor Collective
Todd Ashker, C-58191, PBSP-SHU
Arturo Castellanos, C-17275, PBSP-SHU
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